

With Greater Frequency

by Michael J. Hollows

HE HUNKERED DOWN behind the rockcrete barricade, keeping his whole body in cover to avoid being detected. His black carapace armour was pitted and scarred from repeated fire, it had already saved his life on more than one occasion. The armour was so battered he did not think it would offer much protection as he crouched behind cover. He could sense that there were enemy warriors nearby, the sound of occasional weapons fire evidence that they were advancing.

The other members of his squad were nowhere to be seen, now they were presumably lost in the fog, pinned down or worse, dead. Sergeant Agraax had led them in to this, adamant that they would prevail and prove their worth to the Chapter, now he too was gone, leaving Parvall alone.

Dust was falling off the barricade in torrents, but this was no normal dust fall brought on by the unsettling affect of the battle. The rockcrete wall seemed to vibrate in an unnatural way, the solid barrier almost pulsing in an irregular timing. Normally he would assume there was a large vehicle approaching, the weight of its tracks disturbing the ruins around it, dislodging the dust. But, this was no normal dust fall. He could feel the vibration transmitting through the barricade as he touched his hand to its surface. Even through the dark bodyglove encasing his body the vibrations felt weird and pulsating. The low frequency energy was slowly building intensity and rising in pitch, dislodging more material from the ruined defences.

Suddenly a strange keening sound erupted from the direction of the enemy forces. Parvall had to resist the overwhelming urge to drop his rifle and clamp his hands to his ears. The high frequency sound assaulted his eardrums, quickly growing painful. Losing his rifle now would do him no good. The sound was almost calling to him, speaking of untold glory and great power, trying to break down his mental defences. With the urge to cover his ears was the urge to stand up walk out in to no-man's land, tempting him to join the enemy and fight for the true gods.

The pain increased building in pressure behind his eyes, forcing a headache in to his temples. Tentatively he reached a gloved hand up to his ear, suddenly feeling a damp sensation on his cheek. His ears were sore, painful. As he drew his hand back again from his head he noticed the once black glove was now covered in blood, his blood. The pressure behind his eyes increased as the sound drew nearer, his mind ached with sharp pains and his vision swam.

There was only one thing for it, he would have to destroy whatever was producing this sound or die trying.

SLOWLY HE REACHED for the rifle now resting at his knees. It had fallen as the pain in his head increased and he had momentarily lost control. To resist the call of that sound had taken all his willpower, focussing his mind and muttering a prayer to the Emperor. He wasn't sure that his eardrums perforating, causing thick blood to slowly drip down his cheeks, had helped or not.

Forcing away the pain Parvall brought the scope of his rifle to his eye and began scanning around for the source of the awful noise. The fog was thick and covered everything, intermingling with the black smoke from ruined carcasses of tanks and the diffuse orange glow of fires. Finding targets was difficult, the shapes mere silhouettes and he couldn't confirm if they were friend or foe.

Off to his left, past the barricade he could see a small group of figures kneeling on the ground. They were evidently in pain, their hands clasped to their ears, their bodies thrashing beyond control. The poor soldiers had been affected by the same sound that was deafening Parvall, but it was affecting them far more. They had been seduced by the siren call and had left cover to find its source. Now, due to the proximity of the attack, their flesh was slowly peeling from bones, melting away. They were in absolute agony, the pain overwhelming. Their wails added to the cacophony of noise.

Behind the small figures writhing in agony emerged the massively armoured forms of giants. There were two of them, clad in armour of the deepest black and purple and they carried weapons of a strange almost alien design. Each weapon seemed to seethe and mutate in the warriors grasp as though they were vibrating beyond control.

‘Emperor’s Children!’ Parvall breathed quietly.

The traitor’s presence went a long way to explain the discomforting sound. It was well known that the traitor legion employed the most insane, depraved ways of killing.

Before the sonic weapons could stall him again, he lined up one of the enemies between the stark crosshairs of his scope. The traitor had his head exposed, enjoying the scene with a wry grin of pleasure. Unknowingly, without a helmet, the enemy made a perfect target for Parvall as he hid behind the wall. An expert marksman, this was an easy opportunity for him. Only the pain in his temples could distract him, but he had done this a hundred times before. Breathe out and depress the trigger, exactly as his tutors on Medusa instructed.

One by one each of the enemy’s heads violently exploded in a splash of thick crimson gore, every shot fired with a precision only a practiced sniper could maintain. Breathe out, depress the trigger, repeat. The three giants fell to the ground, covered in their own brain matter, their armour now a mix of purple and red. They would not be getting back up again. Abruptly the keening sound stopped and the pressure in Parvall’s head ceased, leaving in its wake a dull ache.

When he returned to the chapter they would have to heal the many wounds of this campaign. Some of his flesh may even need replacing, beyond repair. His ear drums may never recover from the ferocious assault and he may need new bionics in order to hear properly again. But it did not bother Parvall, he would embrace the repairs to his body, new bionics and his deeds this day would help mark him out amongst the chapter.

‘The Flesh is Weak...’